



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

September 23, 2005

News Release

BURNSVILLE MAN CHARGED WITH PRODUCING, DISTRIBUTING CHILD PORNOGRAPHY *ICE investigation beginning in Atlanta leads to Minnesota*

MINNEAPOLIS—As a result of an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents and local law enforcement agencies, a Burnsville man made an initial appearance in federal court today after being criminally charged for allegedly using prepubescent girls to produce child pornography in his basement.

ICE special agents, assisted by Burnsville Police officers, arrested Bruce W. Betcher, 51, of Burnsville, Minn., yesterday morning. He was later charged by the U.S. Attorney's office for the District of Minnesota with using a minor to produce sexually explicit images and then distributing them.



The local investigation was triggered when ICE special agents in Atlanta executed a federal search warrant at a residence in August, during which a computer was seized. More than 2,000 images of child pornography were found on the computer's hard drive. These images were forwarded to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) for forensic analysis. The ICE CyberCrimes Center in Virginia has special agents assigned to a NCMEC task force.

Analysis of the images led NCMEC and ICE to believe that some of them — which showed prepubescent girls engaged in explicit sex acts — were taken in the basement of a Twin Cities area home, according to a criminal complaint filed in federal court. The investigation led ICE agents, working with the Minnesota Internet Crimes Against Children (MICAC) task force and the Burnsville Police Department, to Betcher's residence.

During the execution of a search warrant Monday evening by the Burnsville Police Department, officers seized three computers, a digital camera and storage media, and a printed page bearing images of child pornography.

ICE Bloomington special agents and Burnsville Police identified six local girls in the photographs. During an interview with law enforcement officials, one of the girls named Bruce Betcher as the photographer, according to the criminal complaint.

“ICE works in close partnership with all levels of law enforcement to protect the most vulnerable among us,” said Mark A. Cangemi, special agent in charge of the ICE office in Bloomington. “Removing dangerous sexual predators from our communities is a top priority.”

If convicted of the charges, Betcher faces a mandatory minimum of 15 years in prison. Assistant U.S. Attorney Erica MacDonald is prosecuting the case.

As with any criminal case, a charge is merely an accusation; a defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

Betcher’s arrest is part of Operation Predator, ICE’s comprehensive initiative to safeguard children from foreign national pedophiles, international sex tourists, Internet child pornographers, and human traffickers. Since Operation Predator was launched in July 2003, ICE agents have arrested more than 6,300 individuals nationwide, including 191 in Minnesota, making it one of the top 10 states for these arrests.

To enhance efforts to protect children, ICE has formed partnerships with several non-governmental organizations, including the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) and World Vision’s child sex tourism prevention project, to provide prevention and deterrence information to the public. ICE plans to expand these partnerships in the coming year.

Members of the public wishing to report suspicious activity may contact ICE at 1-866-DHS-2ICE or Operation.Predator@dhs.gov. Additionally, NCMEC can be contacted at 1-800-843-5678 or at www.cybertipline.com. Additional information about the operation is posted at www.ice.gov.

Member agencies of the MICAC task force participating in this investigation are: St. Paul Police Department, Hennepin County Sheriff’s Department, Anoka County Sheriff’s Department and the Woodbury Police Department.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.